



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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July 8, 2009

Dr. Roy E. Crabtree
Regional Administrator
Southeast Regional Office
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Subject: EPA NEPA Comments on NOAA FEIS for the "Snapper Grouper Amendment 15B"; South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; South Atlantic Ocean; CEQ #20090203; ERP #NOA-E91021-00

Dear Dr. Crabtree:

Consistent with our responsibilities under Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Snapper Grouper Amendment 15B to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP). EPA provided NEPA comments on the DEIS for Amendment 15B in a letter dated January 7, 2008, and additional comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) in a letter dated May 14, 2008.

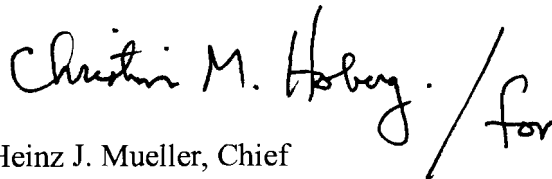
We note that NOAA responses to our comments on the DEIS are found on pages IV-VI of the FEIS. Our comments on the SDEIS were not substantive. We offer the following final comments on the FEIS for Amendment 15B:

* Responses to DEIS: We appreciate that EPA's comments were specifically addressed for Action 5, Action 6 and regarding ecosystem management. However, the document could have been improved by also responding to our letter's comments/suggestions on Actions 2-4 and possibly Action 8 if substantive numbers of EJ fishers exist in the fishery. Moreover, the NOAA response to Action 5, while substantive, would also have been improved if actual bycatch discard survivorship data (even if incomplete) would have been summarized or referenced, as opposed to only stating the sources and frequency of such data. These data might have shown a trend for discard survivorship subject to additional data collection and analysis.

* Editorial: The FEIS cover was inadvertently dated July 2008 instead of July 2009.

Overall, EPA continues to support Amendment 15B. Should you have questions regarding these comments, feel free to contact Chris Hoberg of my staff at 404/562-9619 or hoberg.chris@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Chris M. Hoberg, followed by a slash and the word "for" in cursive.

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office
Office of Policy and Management

cc: Dr. Paul N. Doremus
NEPA Coordinator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI)
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